The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 163 March 2011

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Charles H. Amidon

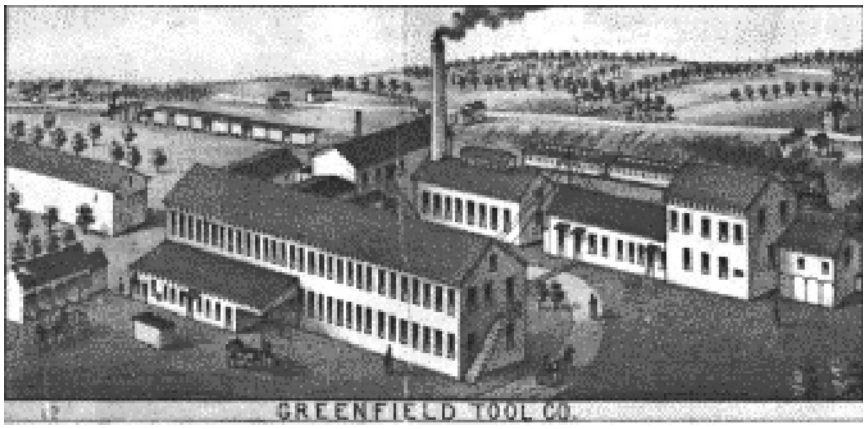
Millers Falls Co-Founder & Inventor

By Randy Roeder © 2011

Amidon's early years

Charles Henry Amidon was the son of David Amidon, a shoemaker from Reedsboro, Vermont, who moved his family to Monroe, in Franklin County, Massachusetts, in the late 1820s. Charles, the third of nine children, was born there on the 28th of May in 1830. The Amidon family appears to have moved back and forth between Massachusetts and Vermont several times during Charles' childhood. At the age of twenty-two, Charles Amidon married Louisa M. Yeomans, a young woman working as a servant in the nearby town of Ashfield. The couple moved to Greenfield where Charles took a job with the Greenfield Tool Company—an enterprise on its way to becoming one of the largest manufacturers of wooden hand planes in the United States. Their marriage was not a lengthy one; Louisa died at Greenfield in December 1854. Ten months later, Charles was married again, to Harriet E. Rounds, the woman who became his lifelong companion.

Amidon's aptitude for things mechanical soon became apparent. Between 1852 and 1854, he was one of the five men at Greenfield Tool assigned the difficult task of making complex wooden plow planes. He advanced to a position as a machinist and received his first exposure to the patent application process as co-assignee of a hollow mortising chisel he had developed with A.C. Hitchcock, Greenfield's filletster plane specialist. While at the Tool Company, Amidon made the acquaintance of Levi Gunn, his future partner and a co-founder of the Millers Falls Manufacturing Company. The two men worked well together and soon held the contract for the manufacture of all the company's tools. Innovators by nature and interested in production, the pair developed and installed machinery to minimize the amount of handwork going into the operation's manufactured goods.



Gunn & Amidon

In 1861, while still employed by the Greenfield Tool Company, Gunn and Amidon established a small business in Greenfield for the manufacture of household wash wringers. Their enterprise began

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NEXT MEETING

April 3, 2010 –1PM

HOST Masonic Lodge Highbridge,NJ

Marc Benedict (Shoe Maker) will present a program on leatherworking and leatherworking tools.

Please mark your calendar

Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society of New Jersey

President	BOB GARAY, Hopatcong, NJ e-mail, takeadip@optonline.net
Vice President	DON KAHN, Hackensack, NJ
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The purpose of CRAFTS of New Jersey is to encourage interest in early trades and industries, and in the identification, study, preservation and exhibition of tools and implements used and made in New Jersey as an integral part of our heritage.

Membership in CRAFTS is open to anyone who shares the above interests. Annual dues per person or couple are fifteen dollars for the membership year of July 1 through June 30. Membership fees may be sent to: Hank Allen, 524 Harristown Road, glen Rock, NJ 07452 (write check payable to CRAFTS of New Jersey).

CRAFTS of NJ meetings are held at the HOST Masonic Lodge in High Bridge, N.J.

Take 1-78 to Route 31 exit at Clinton. Go north on Route 31, two miles to second traffic light at the High Bridge exit. Turn right and go about half a mile to Dennis Avenue. Turn left, then straight to the Masonic Lodge (on the left).

Tailgate sales in the parking lot begin at 10 A.M., meeting starts at 1 P.M.

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e-mail- ddak@optonline.net

Articles, especially about early tools and trades, are encouraged and may be sent to the Editor.

CRAFTS WEBSITE
www.craftsofnj.org
Containing general information about CRAFTS and its activities including: meeting schedules, *Tool Shed* articles, etc.

New Members

John R. Czekaj Neshanic Station, NJ
Donald Groehe Clinton, NJ
Mike Imel Palm Harbor, FL
David J. Mix Howell, NJ

President's Corner

I think this Tool Shed will greet everyone looking forward to the end of a challenging winter. The amount of snow has set records and has kept me in shape. It is one of the few times I get to see all my neighbors outside at the same time. Of course there is time to lean on the shovel and catch up on how each other is doing. They ask me about how I am enjoying retirement and I remind them I did not retire but re-energized. I had collected antique tools for over twenty years with the idea of becoming an antique tool dealer when I retired. Now that I am into this new phase of my life I have to say I am busier than ever. I sell about ten to fifteen tools a week on eBay. I am also selling at shows and flea markets and have even done yard sales. My next big step is to get my web site together so I can become a cyber seller. I have to admit that I am working as hard now that I am retired as ever I did when I was "working". But now I am my own boss and I get to work out of my own home. I like this new business and find it satisfying to meet new people and reacquaint myself with other tool collectors. I hope to meet many of you during the coming year at an "event" and discuss tools and CRAFTS.

We just had a great weekend at the woodworking show at the Garden State Exhibit Center. We had about eight of our directors set up there to promote CRAFTS and sell tools. The response we got from the attendees was overwhelming. Many had no idea these antique tools still existed. Many were very interested in our club and we handed out over 400 flyers for membership and our auction. I thank the directors who set up and spent some long days promoting CRAFTS, I know the show will want us back again next year.

Our auction coordinators are very busy getting all the details arranged for our Auction April 9th. We have plenty of photos of the better pieces on our CRAFTS website currently. So take a look. Get to the fire house early as the tail-gate sales should start at sunrise. The doors will open at about 7:30 to preview the auction. The guys at the fire house will be cooking up some breakfast and grilling lunch. The auction starts 9:30 and should be over by the early afternoon. Bring a friend as the auction is open to the public. Hope to see you there. ■

CRAFTS Display at the woodworking show.

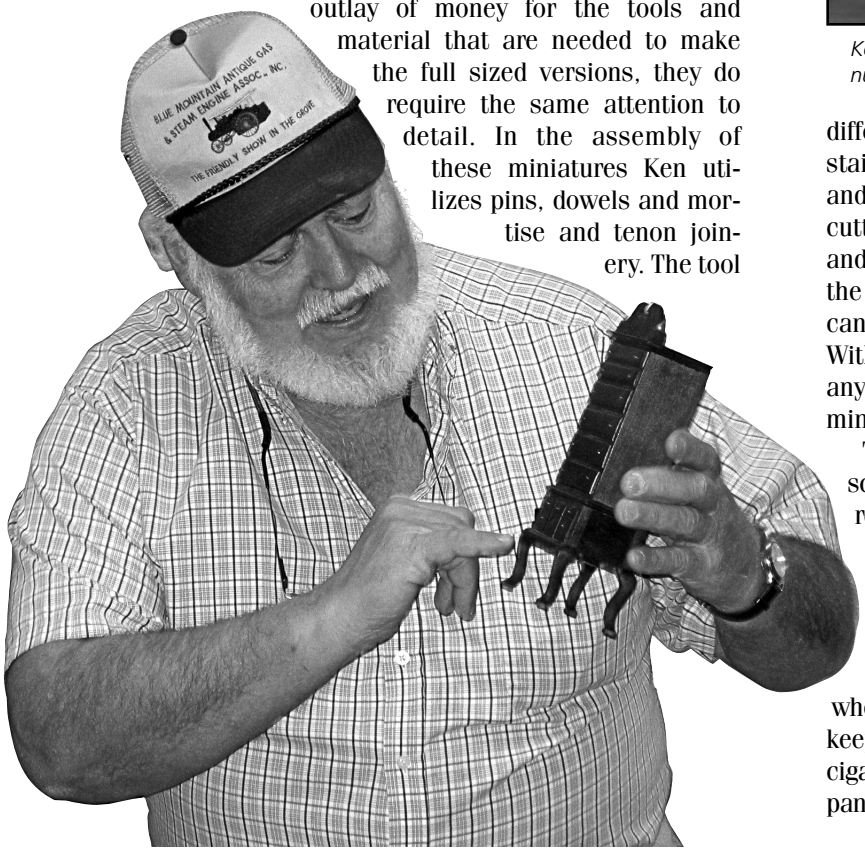
Ken Vleit–Making Miniatures

Given all of the cold and snowy weather that we've had a mid-winter February CRAFTS meeting could have been a hit or miss prospect. However, while plenty of snow remained on the ground, the blue skies along with a balmy mid forties temperature and no wind made for a delightful day. As an added treat, Bob Garay served a large pot of very tasty stew to add additional warmth to the surprising amount of parking lot tool selling activity.

I am continually amazed by the depth of talent and knowledge brought forth by our membership, whether from the displays and discussions surrounding their tool collections or their generous efforts to promote their craftsmanship. Ken Vleit, in addition to his duties as Picnic Chairman is known for his love of antique tools, but also for his collection of toys and miniatures. It was the display of his collection and how he makes them that was presented at the February meeting.

Ken has been making miniatures for most of his life, at least, since he was a teenager when he made replicas of the farm equipment that he was surrounded by as a youngster. A stern college woodshop teacher was an inspiration for Ken to continue with his craft after he received a congratulatory letter concerning a miniature Kentucky Rifle that Ken displayed at the school.

While these miniatures don't require the substantial outlay of money for the tools and material that are needed to make the full sized versions, they do require the same attention to detail. In the assembly of these miniatures Ken utilizes pins, dowels and mortise and tenon joinery. The tool requirements for miniatures are simple and many of them can be made from common items found around the house with the additional benefit that all can be used indoors at the kitchen table. For example, clamps can be as simple as a close pin or paper clip. Jeweler's saws and small razor saws along with miniature miter boxes can be found at any hobby center. Common pin vises and egg beater drills are used to drill pilot holes. Knives like an Xacto with its replaceable blades, which come in many different configurations, are especially useful. A six inch stainless steel rule is a must and an assortment of files and rasps, both flat and rattail, along with a pair of wire cutters, a few small chisels and gouges, a small square and a small hammer will round out a basic kit of tools for the miniaturist. Another tool that is not necessary but can make things much easier is a Dremel rotary tool. With this tool you can sand, drill, grind and cut almost any material you're likely to encounter when making miniatures.



Ken's beautiful miniature wheelwright's tools, note the rams-head nut and the specialized wheelwright's anvils.

The sizes of most of Ken's pieces are governed by the scale to which they are built. The small buildings, like the replica of the house that he was raised in, are in HO or 1/87th scale where 0.14 inches = 1 foot. Most often though, Ken builds in 1/12th or 1 inch = 1foot, a scale commonly used by doll house makers. Ken prefers to use hardwoods, especially exotics because they take detail better than softwoods and are less likely to split when drilled. Inexpensive materials are easily found if you keep your eyes open, according to Ken. For example: wood cigar boxes yield some very nice wood, and pieces of old paneling are sometimes found containing rosewood or

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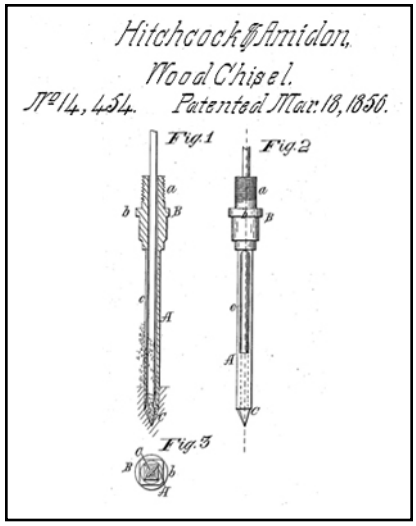
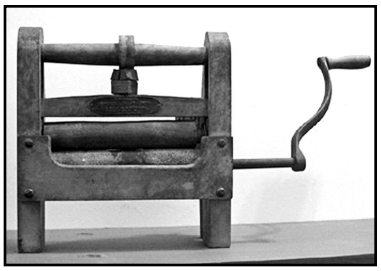
Charles H. Amidon
Millers Falls Co-Founder & Inventor

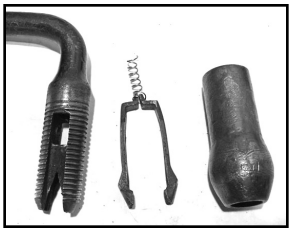
Continued from page 1

modestly. Wringers were assembled in rented rooms at a rundown steam mill near Greenfield's first railway station. Undercapitalized and unsure of success, Gunn and Amidon chose to remain in their positions with the Greenfield Tool Company and tended to the new business part time. A year later, Amidon was issued United State Letters Patent No. 36,761 for a wringer roller that applied even pressure on the clothing passing through it. The patent was issued after the fact—the operation had already been producing the design for some time. At the time of the startup, the men were not partners in the legal sense of the word. An ad for the wringer in the August 24, 1863, Greenfield Gazette and Courier includes, in boldface, the notation, "L.J. Gunn, Manufacturer and Proprietor." It was not until later that year—some thirty months after the founding of the business—that Amidon became a full partner in the enterprise. As it became apparent that the wringer enterprise had a chance of success, the men left their jobs at Greenfield Tool to direct their attention to the new endeavor. The change in Amidon's status coincided with the completion of a large addition to the operation's factory on Cherry Rum Brook. The timing of the events suggests a significant capital investment on Amidon's part. At this point, the legal name of the business became Gunn & Amidon.





Amidon's first wringer
Courtesy of Museum of Our Industrial Heritage



Original Barber's Patent Chuck May 24, 1864

The company's primary product was a wash wringer Amidon had patented in 1862. It sold well, and an improved version was brought out three years later. On May 24th of 1864, William H. Barber, a Greenfield native, was issued a patent for a chuck that was ideally suited for use on bit braces. Barber, a machinist who had been building muskets for the Union Army at the armory in Windsor, Vermont, convinced the partners that his idea could succeed in the marketplace. Although it is unlikely that Gunn and Amidon fully understood the revolutionary significance of his design, they were astute enough to purchase the rights. The decision was a sound one. Barber's shell-type chuck became the standard by which developments in bit-holding technology were judged. Production began at eighteen braces per day; the braces were marketed aggressively; and they sold well.

Given the phenomenal success of the firm's Barber brace, it was almost inevitable that Charles Amidon would begin to toy with brace designs of his own. His first, patented in 1865, consisted of a shell-type chuck with its jaws attached to a floating socket block. His second design, patented in 1867, used an eyebolt and wing nut to hold a bit in place. By 1867, brace production had risen to several hundred units per week, and a decision to de-emphasize the wringer business was made. Rather than manufacturing the new four gear wringer patented by Amidon that spring, the rights were sold to the Bailey Washing and Wringing Machine Company of Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

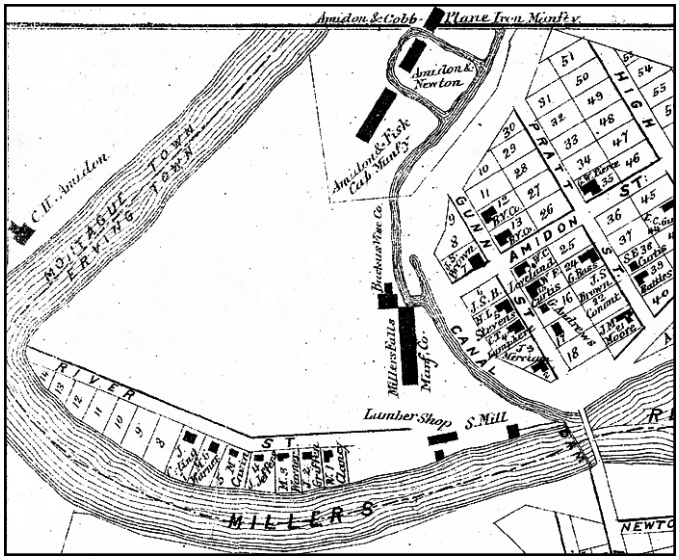
By 1868, it had become apparent to Gunn & Amidon that the business was at a crossroads. Although the firm's patented bit braces were selling well and payroll had grown to twenty workers, the factory was inadequate to meet the demand for its products. Cherry Rum Brook did not supply enough waterpower to support a larger operation so an on-site expansion was not feasible. The partners made do by installing an eight-horsepower steam turbine to provide against the inevitable periods of low flow, but there was simply no substitute for the cheap and efficient power of falling water. It was apparent that a new location would need to be found and another plant would need to be built.

Amidon's 1867 Brace

A new business

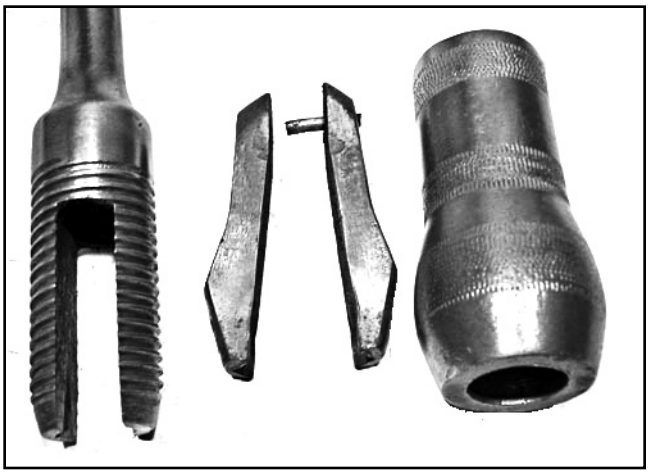
When the waterpower shortage at Gunn & Amidon precluded an expansion of the factory, it became apparent that an infusion of capital was in order. The company's situation came to the attention of Henry L. Pratt, a prosperous lumber dealer and occasional speculator in waterpower rights who had returned to the area after operating a furniture business in Detroit. Pratt recommended that the firm relocate to Grouts Corner, a nearby village and a stop at the junction of the Vermont & Massachusetts and the New London Northern railroads. Consisting of little more than an

inn and a few houses, Grouts Corner was located on the Millers River at a spot where the stream dropped seventy feet over a short series of rapids. Gunn and Amidon, impressed with the potential of the site, joined Henry L. Pratt and James Moore in organizing the Millers Falls Manufacturing Company, an enterprise established "for the purpose of manufacturing hardware and lumber at Millers Falls." On September 21, 1868, notice of the incorporation appeared in the Greenfield Gazette and Courier. The newspaper also reported that $100,000 in stock had been issued, that waterpower rights had been secured and that 200 acres of land had been purchased.



Map showing canal made by Millers Falls Co. that Charles Amidon and his brother built their factories on.

This brought an end to the partnership of Gunn & Amidon. During his association with Gunn, Charles Amidon had developed three wash wringers and two bit braces for the operation. His contribution to the new company was no less significant. In addition to serving as plant superintendent, his 1868 re-design of the Barber chuck was outstanding in its simplicity and function, for in addition to being cheaper to manufacture, its jaws provided a secure grip on a wider variety of shanks. Amidon's Barber Improved brace became the operation's best-selling tool and had as much to do with the company's prosperity as any single product. When Charles Amidon left the company in 1870 to establish his own business, Millers Falls Mfg. retained the rights to manufacture bit braces under his patents. His departure did not go smoothly. Amidon had a falling out with Millers Falls Manufacturing when the firm sued him for $1,000 to cover non-payment for goods received. Although he maintained that the goods were due him as salary for work done when superintendent, there must have been some merit in the Millers Falls complaint; Amidon paid $750 to settle the suit.


Amidon's improved Barbers patent chuck

Amidon's Factory

Amidon's departure from the company left him with cash in his pocket. In January 1870, the month he left the operation, Amidon bought a farm from Solomon Caswell, and two weeks later, he purchased a waterpower right on the Millers Falls Mfg. Company's canal. The summer found him occupied with building a new barn (with a full cellar) on his farm and a factory at the canal site. The new, two-story brick factory was completed in January 1871. The building was to be given over to the production of baby carriages, and Charles Amidon was not alone in assuming the risks of the venture. Charles E. Fisk, a Greenfield coach maker who had once shared a house with Amidon, became a partner in the operation. Orson F. Swift, a flighty investor and dealer in tin ware, joined the firm soon after, and Henry M. Dunbar, a longtime acquaintance of Amidon, became an investor before the year was up. The new business was named the Amidon Manufacturing Company.

Amidon had known Henry Dunbar since his youth. Henry was the son of Charles Dunbar, one of the Connecticut Dunbars who had migrated to the Monroe area of Franklin County earlier in the century. Ties between the Dunbars and Amidons were close; the families had shared a household in 1850. Charles Amidon's mother, Bertha, was a Connecticut Dunbar, and it is likely that he and Henry were cousins. Henry had worked for Charles Amidon during the early years of the Millers Falls Mfg. Company and had lost four hundred dollars in stock and tools when fire destroyed the factory in December 1868.

The Amidon Manufacturing Company was located next to the factory of Solomon H. Amidon, Charles' younger brother. Solomon and his partner, Jesse Newton, built a two-story, 40 x 60 foot brick building to serve as headquarters and manufactory for Amidon & Newton, producers of small hardware items and operators of a successful construction company.

Charles Amidon's responsibilities at the carriage shop did not put an end to his design work. He soon became involved in the development of drilling and boring devices equipped with feed mechanisms. In December 1872, he patented a hand drill with an offset crank that could be clamped to one jaw of an ordinary mechanic's vise. The

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Charles H. Amidon
Millers Falls Co-Founder & Inventor

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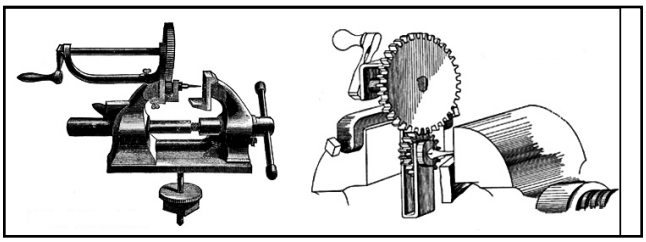
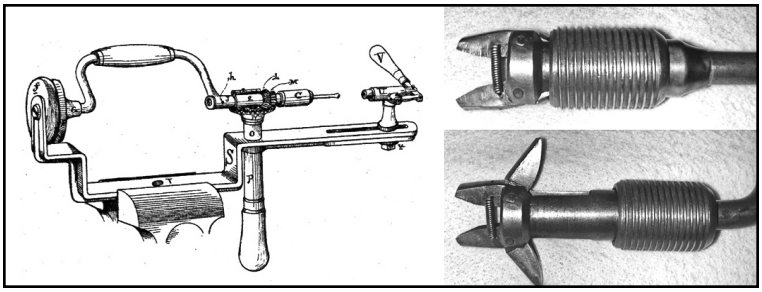


Miller Falls Catalog *Amidon Patent*

drawings accompanying the patent bear a marked resemblance to a vise drill pictured in a ca. 1875 Millers Falls Company catalog. A side-by-side comparison of the illustrations shows similarities in the gearing and general thinking behind the tools but a different approach to the design of the crank. Since the text accompanying the catalog illustration makes no mention of Amidon and contains no patent information, there is not enough evidence as yet to conclude that the tool sold by Millers Falls was designed by him. On July 1, 1873, Charles Amidon was issued a patent for a bit brace that could be converted to a hand drill. The tool was designed to be mounted on a frame equipped with a feeding device that would move a piece of stock into a rotating drill bit. Although the feed mechanism was not successful, a bit brace based on the 1873 patent was put into production - a move that did much to enhance the diversity of the Amidon Manufacturing Company's product line.



1873 patent drawing on left. Right is actual chuck of this patent.

In January 1873, Charles H. Amidon was issued yet another patent, this one for a baby carriage with an adjustable push handle, pivoting rear wheels, and a recliner seat. Another baby coach patent followed in early 1875. It featured a bi-directional, adjustable top that allowed a surprising amount of flexibility in protecting a child from the sun. Modeled on the carriages of the well-to-do, the firm's coaches were intended to appeal to a prosperous middle class, and it is not surprising that skilled carriage makers such as Charles Fisk were involved in their production.

Unfortunately, the business climate in the mid-1870s was less than ideal—especially for companies whose well-being depended on discretionary spending by younger, middle class consumers. Although the Amidon Manufacturing Company had begun to fabricate bit braces and other small items, its primary product—a high-end baby carriage—was highly vulnerable to an economic recession. A downturn, which began with the Panic of 1873, lasted for nearly five years, and Amidon Manufacturing, like so many other small companies, would struggle and fail.

By February 1875, losses had reached the point at which it was necessary to declare bankruptcy. Although the factory and grounds were sold to satisfy creditors that June, the equipment remained in the hands of the principals, who continued to operate the business in the original building—now owned by the private bankers Cheney & Waite. (At some point, the firm, or at least some part of it, had been renamed the Amidon Bit Brace Company.)

The situation at Charles Amidon's company went from bad to worse. On the evening of January 19, 1876, a fire broke out in the north attic of the operation's factory. The ensuing conflagration destroyed two-thirds of the 123 x 50 foot building. The part of the structure that burned housed the carriage-making operation, and although the building belonged to Cheney & Waite, the loss in tools and stock was substantial. Enough of the factory remained, however, so that after a brief pause, the bit brace business was able to continue in the undamaged part of the building.

Charles H. Amidon and Henry M. Dunbar filed for personal bankruptcy within days of the fire. Seven months later, a notice that Charles E. Fisk had opened a carriage-making shop in Greenfield appeared in the Gazette and Courier. The manufacture of bit braces continued at the Amidon Bit Brace Company for a time, but in May of 1877, the equipment was sold to Elijah R. Saxton of Buffalo, New York, a former business partner of Gunn, Amidon & Company.

E.R. Saxton had done well since his departure from Gunn, Amidon & Saxton a decade earlier. He had become a partner in the Buffalo Forge Company, a steam forge founded in 1863 that specialized in the manufacture of axles for rail cars and heavy duty shafting. Interested in the workings of his new hometown, Elijah Saxton became active in Republican Party politics and was elected alderman for Buffalo's Second Ward. His decision to purchase the equipment of the Amidon Bit Brace Co. factory was made with an eye to setting up an operation for the manufacture of small items for the hardware trade in Buffalo. The Greenfield newspaper reported that Saxton intended to manage the operation himself and to take on "an experienced mechanic from the East to oversee the workmen." The article made no mention of a role for Charles Amidon. ■

See next issue of the Tool Shed for Amidon's work after leaving the Millers Falls area and working in Buffalo, N.Y.

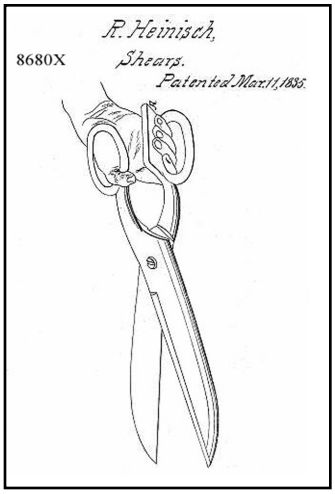
Early New Jersey Tailor's Shears

By Russ Ellis

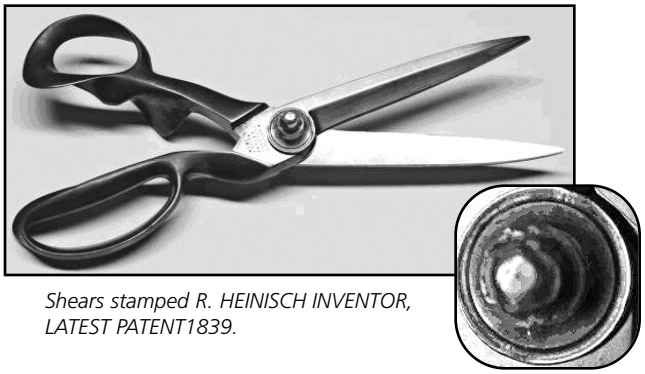
While attending the fall Donnelly auction in Nashua, NH, I bumped into Hank Allen and Bob Garay. Hank had been to my house to see my tool collection and knew I had some early New Jersey tailor's shears. Bob asked if I would write an article about them. It's not my favorite thing to do but I agreed to share some information.

Rochus Heinisch

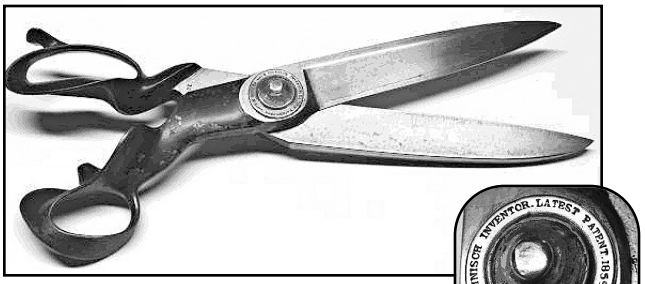
I have three pairs of shears from Rochus Heinisch of Newark, NJ. He was born in Bohemia, Austria in 1801 where he learned the trade of manufacturing surgical instruments. After further perfecting his craft in France, he came to New York in 1825. He opened a business in Elizabeth, NJ in 1829 but soon moved his business to Newark, NJ. It was here that Seth Boyden had perfected the process of making ductile iron castings. His foundries castings were perfect for the idea that Heinisch had for forge welding steel to the face of his shears. Heinisch held the first patent for tailor's shears and was the first to apply a steel face to a malleable iron frame on Tailor's shears.



1835 Heinisch patent where he first improves the tailor's shears handle design.

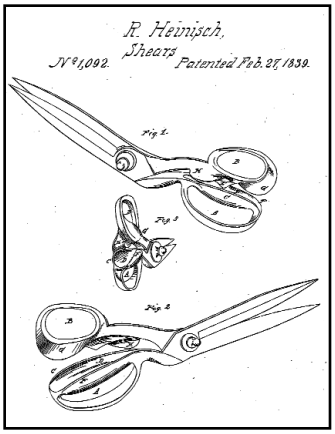


Shears stamped R. HEINISCH INVENTOR, LATEST PATENT1839.



Shears stamped R. HEINISCH INVENTOR, LATEST PATENT1859 - NEWARK, N-J. This patent was for a refinement to his handle design patented in 1839 so it does not cramp the hand while using the shears.

Rochus Heinisch became the world leader in the manufacture of tailor's shears by the Civil War. He brought his three sons into the business so upon his death in 1874 his sons were able to successfully carry on the business. He had taken the design of a rudimentary uncomfortable tailor's shear to one that was so ergonomic that the world modified their design to his standards.



1839 Heinisch patent where he fully develops his innovative handle design.

Crude 18th century shears.

Jacob Wiss

Jacob Wiss was born and learned surgical-instrument making as an apprentice in Switzerland. In 1847 he immigrated to the United States and found employment in Newark, N.J. at the Heinisch Shear factory. In 1848 he went into business for himself starting off so humble that he used a St. Bernard dog on a treadmill to power his grinding and

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Early New Jersey Tailor's Shears

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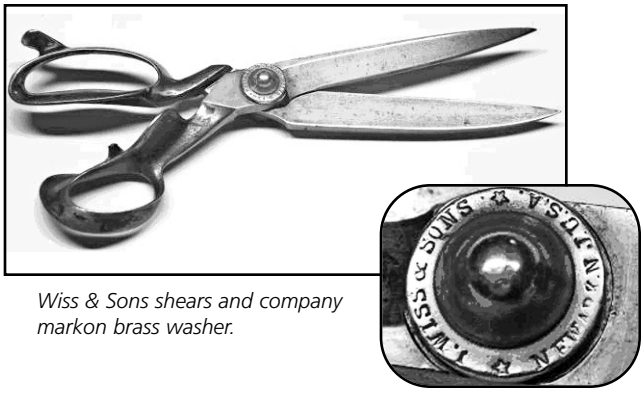
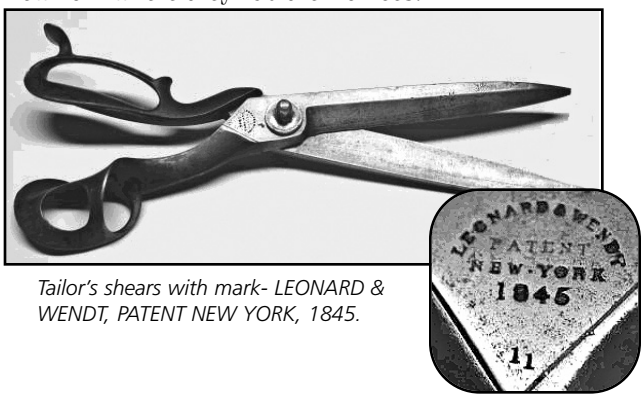
polishing wheels. Over the years he refined his craft and when the Civil War broke out he was able to procure government contracts for surgical scissors and garment shears. This experience led to many improvements in design and manufacturing practices. Over the years he taught his four sons the business, which they took over in 1880 upon his death. In 1914 Wiss & Sons bought out R. Heinisch's Sons Co. and the company continued in business until 1973.



Wiss & Sons shears and company markon brass washer.

Other makers of Tailor's shears

I have a pair of shears by **Leonard and Wendt**; they were in business from 1843 – 1853 in Elizabeth, NJ. The shears are stamped "LEONARD AND WENDT PATENT NEW YORK 1845". I believe they were made in New Jersey and sold in New York where they had their offices.

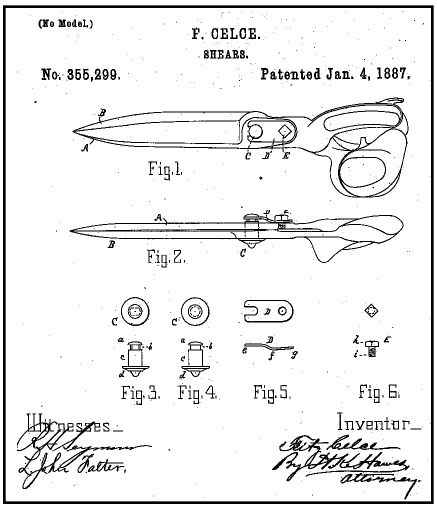


Tailor's shears with mark- LEONARD & WENDT, PATENT NEW YORK, 1845.

The next pair of shears was made by **Wendt and Seymour;** they were in business from 1858 – 1860 in Elizabeth, NJ. Wendt held many patents for shears over the years and even assigned sheep shears & pruning shears to Seymour & Co. after they split up. In 1860 they employed sixty workers to produce about 200 dozen shears and scissors a week.

Tailor's shears with mark-WENDT & SEYMOUR, #10, PATENT< NEW YORK.

Henry Seymour Cutlery Co., Elizabeth N.J. 1850 – 1913. After Henry Seymour left his partnership with Hermann Wendt he remained in the business of making tailor's shears and other cutlery.

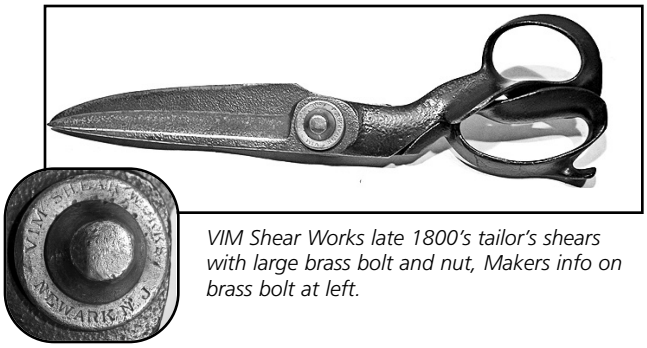


TOP: *Shears made by Henry Seymour, patented Jan. 4, 1887,*
Right:: *Maker's stamp and patent date mark.*
Above Left:1887 patent drawing by F. Celce assigned to Seymour that uses a bent spring to keep uniform and adjustable pressure between the cutting blades at the crossing edge.

Arlington Shear Co. Newark NJ. No information can be found on this company. The Tailor's shears look to be manufactured in the early 1900's. Tin snips by this company have also been found.

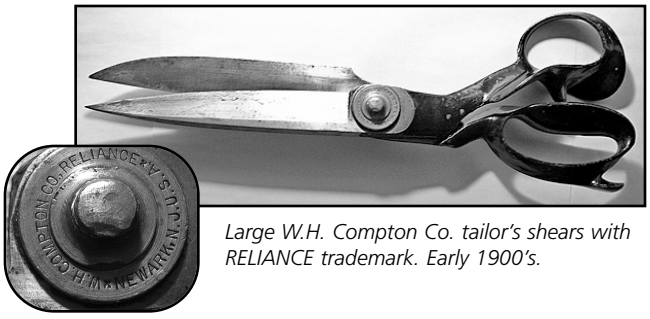
Mark on Arlington Shear Co. tailor's shears

Vim Shear Works Newark, NJ. No information on this company has been found. Alex Farnham in the Newark Directories found a Vim Metals Co. which is the only reference to this name.



VIM Shear Works late 1800's tailor's shears with large brass bolt and nut, Makers info on brass bolt at left.

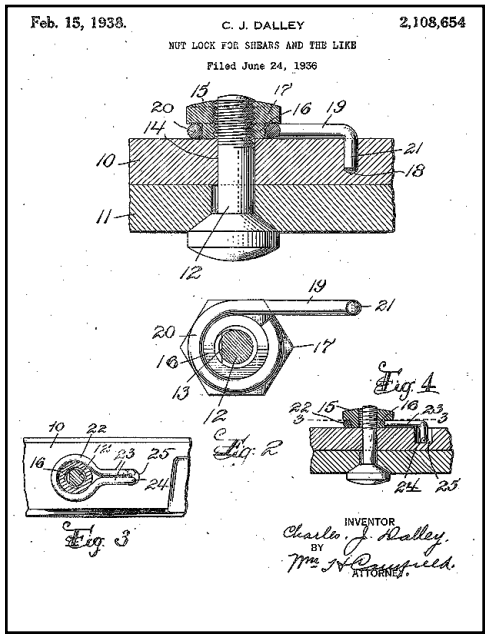
Compton Shear Co. was a late comer in the New Jersey Tailor's shear business. They started making Tailor's shears in the 1890's as well as many other edge tools. Their company was still manufacturing scissors up until recently.



Large W.H. Compton Co. tailor's shears with RELIANCE trademark. Early 1900's.

I did not intend to add a shear collection to my tool collection, but just like a pair of rabbits they just multiplied. Thanks to my grandson Evan Ellis Filkins for taking the pictures and formatting this article.

For more information on New Jersey tailor's shears see SE*ARCH FOR EARLY NEW JERSEY TOOL MAKERS* and. *EARLY TOOLS OF NEW JERSEY AND THE MEN WHO MADE THEM* both by Alex Farnham. ■



Top: *Compton Shear Co. Newark, NJ - 1938 Patent.*
Bottom: *Patent drawing showing design using a heavy wire to lock a nut onto the bolt against rotation on hinge of shears. C. Dalley patent assigned to Compton.*

WANTED
Member's email addresses

If you have not been receiving notices from Stew May, and would like to be included, please send your email address to hankallen@verizon.net. Thanks and happy holidays!

HERB KEAN

Kean Kuttin's

THE JACARANDA TREE

Antique tools have some wonderful stories attached to them. And it's no surprise that they do, as they are the bulwark of man's progressthrough the centuries. However, here is a tale (or legend) that existsin today's modern world. It started like this:

I was selling a ship's bevel on eBay that was particulary decorative. The wood looked a little off-beat to me, but I thought it was just one of the varieties of rosewood, and so stated. The bevel got the bidding activity that I suspected, as it certainly was different. It had a scale on one side that appeared "English" that was marked "HAMBURG", and one on the other side that was Metric. Everything else was the normal ship's bevel configuration.

About half way through the 7 day period of the auction, I received an email from an eBayer in Germany. He really put some light on the subject. He stated that the mark of "HAMBURG" was the definition of the scale that I thought was in "English" graduations. It was the measurements that were used in Hamburg, Germany in the days when each district or state in Europe had their own set of measurement criteria. It was exceptionally close to an "English" scale. It was in truth a Comparative Rule, between the Hamburg scale and the Metric scale, besides being a ship's bevel! WOW!

It's not over yet.

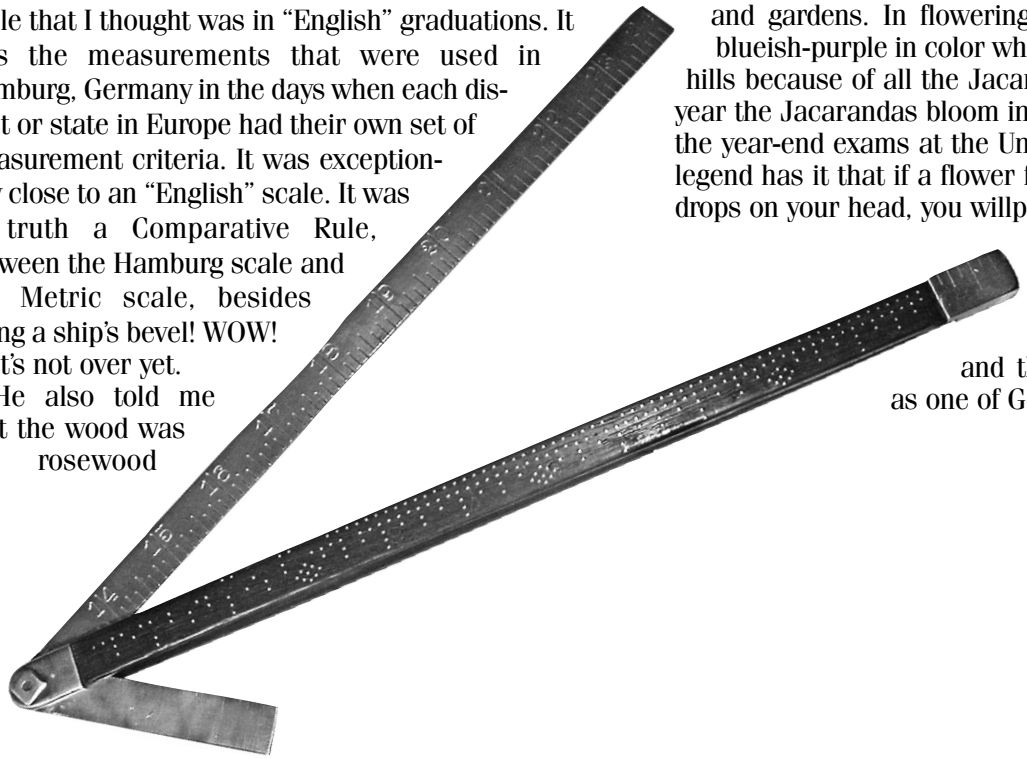
He also told me that the wood was not rosewood but Jacaranda. They spell it Jakaranda in Germany. He was a rule guy with plenty of what seemed to be expert knowledge. He told me that he had other rules of this wood from the area, and that it was considered premier. I have over 150 specimens of woods in my collection. but not one of the Jacaranda tree. I never had the opportunity to get a sample, as Jacaranda was not found in any of the cabinetwoods or in the sample kits.

Before you get on me (the so-called "wood expert") for screwing up the call on the wood, let me defend myself by saying that of my 5 books on wood, only one mentions Jacaranda. And it states, "it is similar to Brazilian Rosewood". So there!

OK, so where is the legend? Here it comes:

"Pretoria in South Africa is popularly known as The Jacaranda City due to the enormous number of Jacaranda trees planted as street trees and in parks and gardens. In flowering time the city appears blueish-purple in color when seen from the nearby hills because of all the Jacaranda trees. The time of year the Jacarandas bloom in Pretoria coincides with the year-end exams at the University of Pretoria, and legend has it that if a flower from the Jacaranda tree drops on your head, you willpass all your exams."

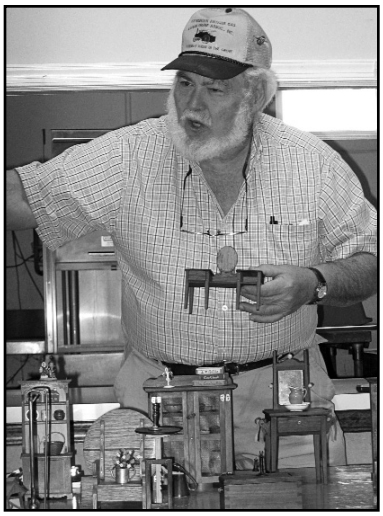
It's nice to know that there are still some "romantic" people in this world, and that they consider trees as one of God's creations. ■



February 2011 meeting

Continued from page 3

mahogany. Old furniture which has far outlived its life can provide wonderful quarter sawn oak or maple. Once, Ken got an old rotting desk with oak veneer from one of his students, which he almost passed up but finally decided to keep, which provided 1 1/4 inch chestnut which was hidden underneath the old veneer. Even the dust panels from an old chest of drawers can be useful especially when found made of quartersawn sycamore, which, can sometimes provide wonderful material that looks very much like lacewood.



Ken deftly handled a lively questions and answer session regarding his construction methods.

If you don't have access to cast-offs (flea markets and garage sales also can be wonderful sources) don't worry. There are stores, like Woodcraft Supply and other hobbyist outlets which carry exotic veneers, and small boards, some as thin as an eighth of an inch. Of course, if you travel the internet, you have access to a limitless number of outlets from around the world, all providing materials for the miniaturist.

The display of miniature furniture was amazing and included: a highboy with cabriole legs, a pie safe, a wash stand with bowl and pitcher, a candle stand with a ratcheting mechanism to raise the table, a dressing table, a dovetailed walnut chest, a dresser with swivel mirror, a round dining table, a tilt-top desk, a corner china cabinet, a grandmothers clock, a hall tree with mirror, a telephone desk, a hunt board, a pie crust table in beautiful curly maple and a tall back bench.

While Ken's renderings of HO scale buildings and his scale furniture are beautifully made, it was the miniatures associated with tools that intrigued me the most, especially the wheelwright's bench and the unusual curved anvil with hammers, the gun barrel lathe, a shaving horse, a leatherworker's bench and a leather sewing vise. Some of his farm tools included a grain cleaner, a silage cutter and a flax beater with a hatchel. They were very nicely done.

It was a real treat to see and hear Ken's enthusiasm for the craft of making miniatures and it was a fine way to spend a mid-winter's afternoon. ■

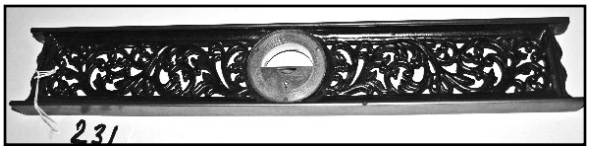
CRAFTS AUCTION PREVIEW

By Bob Garay

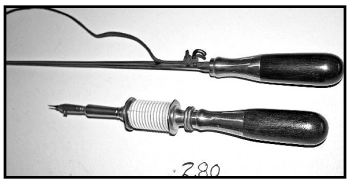
It is an exciting time of the year as the CRAFTS auction is fast approaching. Many members have been working hard to get everything ready. All items are tagged and cataloged ready for the big day. Many auction lots are on our website for a preview. Here are a couple of my favorites that I saw there.

There will be plenty of Mockridge & Francis planes in this auction. One of my favorites is this witchet for making threads in wood dowels.

Before fire stations assisted homeowners with fires, the homeowners in the neighborhood got together to help each other. Every house had a fire bucket to pass along as they formed a line to the nearest water source. This is a great piece of Americana.

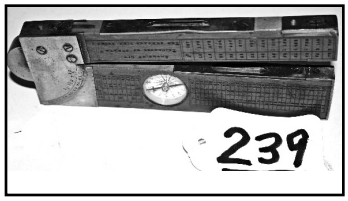


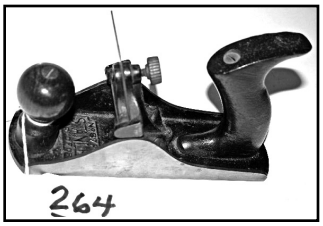
This inclinometer level by Davis Tool & Level Co. is something special. The heavy cast iron level is fragile and usually found with chips and breaks—not here as this one is crisp.



I like any bow drill but the ones by Napolean Erlandsen with ivory and rosewood are something special. To find one with a matching bow is a treat.

Il have many different rules but this one with a compass & level has eluded me. I will be following this one closely. It is sure to draw the attention of many other collectors.





I started my tool collecting with Stanley by the numbers. This one, a No. 87, has always been beyond my reach. With its outstanding condition it may stay there as it is sure to be a hot number.

The TOOL SHED

CRAFTS of New Jersey
15 N. River Styx Road
Hopatcong, NJ 07452

Upcoming Tool Events

Mar 18-19 - Live Free or Die Antique Tool Auctions, Ramada Inn East, Indianapolis, IN. Martin Donnelly, 800-869-0695, www.mjdtools.com

Mar 19 - PATINA Sale/Auction. Damascus, MD The firehall dealers' sales at 9:00 AM, auction will be held at 2:00 PM See website - www.patinatools.org

Mar 23 - Tony Murland general antique tool auction, England. Tony Murland, 011-44-1449 722992, www.antiquetools.co.uk

Mar 26 –David Stanley International Auction, England. David Stanley , 011-44-1530-222320, www.davidstanley.com

Apr 1 – 2 - 38TH International Show/Auction – Brown Auction Services, Radisson Inn, Camp Hill, PA, Clarence Blanchard, 800-248-8114, ceb@finetoolj.com

Apr 3 - CRAFTS of New Jersey meeting, Host Masonic Lodge, Highbridge, NJ, Bob Garay, takeadip@optonline.net

Apr 9 - CRAFTS of New Jersey auction, Oldwick Fire House, Rt. 523, Oldwick, NJ, Greg Welsh, 908-439-3266, glwelsh@earthlink.net

Apr 15-16 - Live Free or Die Antique Tool Auction, Holiday Inn Everett Turnpike, Nashua, NH, Martin Donnelly, 800-869-0695, www.mjdtools.com

Apr 30 – Spicer Auction, Masonic Temple, North Kingstown, RI. Contact Vera Steere - (401) 884-5049

May 21 & 22 – Jacktown - Blue Mountain Antique Gas & Steam Engine Association Swap Meet & Flea Market. Bangor, PA. Contact 610-588-6900, or visit website at www.jacktown.com

June 5 - CRAFTS of New Jersey meeting, Host Masonic Lodge, Highbridge, NJ, Bob Garay, takeadip@optonline.net

Want Ads

WANTED - Member's email addresses. If you have not been receiving notices from Stew May, and would like to be included, please send your email address to hankallen@verizon.net. Thanks and happy holidays!

VINTAGE TOOLS for woodworking, machining, leatherwork and more. See us at New England area tool meets and online at www.TimelessToolsandTreasures.com or write - jane@janebbutler.com.

WANTED- Bell System tools and electrician's pliers. Ted Davidson (609) 731-6915.

NEED HELP disposing of your tools or home items? Entire or partial house clean-outs available. Call Steve Zluky, (908)534-2710.

JIMBODETOOLS.COM - The Largest Antique Tool Website on Earth Buying and Selling Fine Antique Tools Ph: 518-537-8665 email: jim@jimbodetools.com

TOOLS FOR SALE – Stanley planes, patented braces, Disston Saws, and more. Visit my eBay auctions, new tools every week. Bob Garay - eBay seller – TAKEADIP - or Email me at - takeadip@optonline.net

WANTED - Molding planes made of apple wood. Also better molding planes from Hudson River Valley makers. Joe Hauck - 908-236-2072

WANTED - Unusual rabbet planes or rabbet planes made of woods not typically used i.e. maple,cherry, mahoghany, lignum etc. Joe Hauck 908=236-2072 or catskilljoe@yahoo.com

Next Meeting • April 3, 2011 –1PM • HOST Masonic Lodge • Highbridge, NJ